

A. Your Basic Role

1. Try to look at yourself as a member of the group--one with no more authority or prestige than the others, but with a special function of helping all members to do what they as a group decide they must want to do.
2. Your primary job is to help the members select the problems which they wish to discuss and go as far toward solving these problems as they can in time available.
3. How do? You must exercise your judgment from time to time as to how best to move the group forward and as to whether this can be done best by you or by some other member of the group, not forgetting your recorder and resource persons as part of the leadership team.

B. Standards for a Good Discussion Group

1. It permits full participation by all members.
2. It uses its resource persons wisely.
3. It weighs issues fairly.
4. It deals with problems on the basis of sufficient facts.
5. It avoids either a too negative or a too unrealistic approach to problems.
6. It deals with most of the main problems it sets out to discuss.
7. It develops constructive proposals for action.
8. It permits adequate time for summing up.
9. It checks the recorder's report to see that its main views are adequately represented.

C. How to prepare Ahead of Time

1. Discuss with your recorder and, if possible, your resource persons:
 - a. the general duties of each.
 - b. the purpose of your particular discussion group.
 - c. what you know about the subject that needs to be brought forth as minimum information for all participants.
 - d. what additional basic information you will need to obtain or will have to count on the resource person(s) to provide.
2. You may want to outline a few points to use as a guide, but not as a rigid plan.
3. Decide how you are to open the meeting--introductions, etc.

D. How to Guide the Discussion

1. To start the discussion
 - a. In a few words, indicate the purpose of the discussion group; briefly read the discussion guide.
 - b. briefly introduce the recorder and resource persons
 - c. ask each person to introduce himself, state his address, have group indicate what they consider the priority problem in this discussion area which they would like to have considered. They may want to add other problems not listed on the discussion guide.
(if the recorder has a large piece of newsprint or cardboard, and a crayon or magic marker, have them list these points so that all can be kept reminded of these. Boil down the problems' list (especially by combining problems that overlap).
 - d. Decide what problem to start with.

2. Let the group take it from there for the next ten minutes or so.
3. But be prepared, (when the time seems ripe) to:
 - a. summarize (or have the recorder to do so) in two or three sentences what has so far been said; try to state differences clearly and fairly.
 - b. consider what additional information they need to have to deal with the problem intelligently. (The group may want to ask the resource persons a specific question or two here. Keep that resource person, however, briefly, to the point).
 - c. Turn the group to the formulation of action proposals to cope with the problem.
4. When the discussion seems to lead naturally to another problem or when the problem has apparently been adequately concluded, move on to the next problem. (Don't spend all the time on one problem by getting bogged down in details or repetition).
5. Follow a similar procedure as outlined in 3 in handling each subsequent problem.
6. Reserve five to ten minutes before the end of the time allocated for discussion to have the recorder play back her summary. Ask the group for final comments and suggested revisions of the summary.
7. When word comes from the main table, have group members take out their conference evaluation form. Briefly explain its purpose. Give them a few minutes to complete the form. Collect them to give to the conference coordinator.

E. The Discussion Guide

You and your recorder may want to prepare a mimeographed guide to help stimulate discussion. It might be a more specific form of a general outline, such as this:

- A. The Problem of "Citizen Participation" in your problem area.
 1. What are the present forms of citizen participation in this area? What aspects of the problem are they meeting? What gaps and weaknesses in their present efforts? Why?
 2. What should be done to meet needs not presently being met---through citizen participation?
- B. Discussion of "What Should Be Done"
 1. "What specific proposals?"
 2. "What can be done through"
 - a. block branches
 - b. the neighborhood council as a whole?
 - c. other organizations and institutions?
 - d. partisan political groups?
 3. "What needs to be done at each of these levels:
 - a. neighborhood.
 - b. city-wide?
 - c. state-wide
 - d. federal?

Job Sheet for Recordors

As recorder your job is quite different from the stenographer's who takes word-for-word notes. It is also different from the old-fashioned secretary's who recorded only motions, seconds, amendments and votes. Your job is, first of all, creative listening to all that is said. Then you will record the main points from what you hear and organize these for use by your work group and, more selectively, for use by the whole conference.

Here are some suggestions about your job:

1. Keep track of such points as the following:
 - a. Points on which members agree or on which formal action is taken.
 - b. Points on which there are differences of opinion among the members.
 - c. Points on which you are not sure how the members feel.
 - d. Points mentioned but not discussed fully, which the group may wish to consider later.
2. Report to the group what was discussed and concluded rather than merely the general topics of the discussion.
3. Be ready to make an up-to-the-point report of group thinking at any time, and to make an inclusive report at the end of the meeting.
4. Ask the other members to amend your report and invite their suggestions for improvement.
5. Don't feel obligated to report every point made or every member's contribution. In fact, it is probably best not to try to attach names to what was said except when you fear that otherwise a disagreement or minority view may be lost.
6. You will have the duty of summarizing in writing your group's conclusions for the final session of the conference. The conference chairman will use this report in preparing the roundtable groups' summary.
7. You are also responsible for the preparation of resolutions which your group may wish to communicate to the conference unless this responsibility is assigned by the group to someone else.